
Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

May 8, 2003

Hot Topics



Smoke Shrouds Texas; TDH Advises Cautionary Measures

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has announced that southerly winds are expected to continue to bring in smoke from agricultural burnings in Mexico and Central America to the eastern two-thirds of Texas for the next several days. Smoke intensity will vary but is expected to be “moderate” in most of the affected area of Texas, but higher levels have been detected in some areas.

For most people, the smoke will be only an aggravation and irritant, but people with heart problems, allergies, asthma, emphysema, or other respiratory conditions may suffer more severe effects. Children, the elderly and pregnant women should be especially cautious.

The Texas Department of Health is advising residents to be aware of smoke levels in their areas, recognize their own health status and that of family members and take common-sense precautions to reduce the effects of the smoke.

Precautionary measures include: being aware of local smoke levels and staying indoors when smoke is present at higher levels; setting air conditioning units, if possible, to recirculate mode; limiting outdoor activities and the physical stress level of those activities as warranted by local conditions; limiting other actions that can contribute to poorer air quality, such as outdoor burning, grilling, or use of gasoline-powered lawn equipment. *For more information, contact Doug McBride, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7400, or e-mail doug.mcbride@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Reports 7 ‘Suspected’ Cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

Texas is reporting a total of seven “suspected” cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), as of May 2.

All of the suspect cases from Texas had traveled to Hong Kong, Singapore or the Guangdong province of China. The seven are from Harris (2), Collin (2), Lubbock, Fort Bend and Travis counties. All are adults. All have recovered. The Texas Department of Health reports there is no connection between the two suspect cases from Harris County or the two suspect cases from Collin County.

TDH officials also said no secondary cases have been reported in Texas and that there is no indication the seven suspect cases pose an increased risk of illness for the general

public. Current information about SARS indicates that spread of the illness is primarily through respiratory droplets or fluids in direct or close contact situations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 237 “suspect” and 54 “probable” cases of SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome, in the U.S. The 54 probable cases are from 20 states. Texas is not included. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Disease Control and Prevention, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2358, or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



CDC Provides Bioterrorism Guidance

TDH has received guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the cooperative agreement to upgrade state and local public health jurisdictions to prepare for and respond to bioterrorism, other outbreaks of infectious disease and other public health threats and emergencies. Funding for FY 2003 comes in two parts -- \$48,310,184 from CDC to support enhancement to public health, and \$33,338,368 from the U.S. Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration to support hospital preparedness for possible bioterror or other mass casualty events. *For more information, contact Emily Palmer, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7400, or e-mail emily.palmer@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Vaccinates 4,178 for Smallpox

Through May 2, some 4,178 public health response team members, hospital-based medical care personnel and federal employees in Texas have been vaccinated in Phase I of the smallpox vaccination program.

The total includes 2,936 hospital-based personnel with 288 Texas hospitals. Two “moderate to severe” (non life-threatening) adverse events have occurred among the 4,178 vaccinees. Both individuals have recovered. Vaccinations in Texas began Feb. 13 and are continuing. *For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, Office of the State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219, or e-mail dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Cancer Cluster Investigations

The TDH Epidemiology Research and Evaluation Section completed four investigations in March, which were conducted in response to community cancer concerns from across the state. The investigations occurred in Duval, Jim Hogg, Val Verde, and Webb counties; none found any evidence of cancer clusters. Five new “cancer cluster” investigations were initiated in March, and 49 data requests were filled. *For more information, contact Brenda Mokry, Cancer Registry Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-3606, or e-mail brenda.mokry@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Holds Four West Nile Virus Conferences

The TDH Zoonosis Control Division, in partnership with the Texas Public Health Training Center, held a series of two-day West Nile virus training conferences in March and April. The four conference sites included Fort Worth, Odessa, San Antonio and Houston. The conference program provided local public health professionals with the latest information on West Nile virus in Texas, including history of the virus, epidemiology, medial aspects of the disease, vector and virus surveillance, and mosquito control. The agenda also included presentations on public information strategies and legal issues related to West Nile virus, plus a “hands on” demonstration of mosquito traps and other deices to collect, process and submit mosquito samples to a laboratory for identification and testing.

The conferences attracted 370 attendees, predominately city and county public health employees, from across the state. The Zoonosis Control Division used funding from a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant to offer this conference free of charge to state and local government employees and to provide limited travel reimbursement for qualifying local government agencies. *For more information, contact Dr. Eric Fonken, Zooniosis Control Division, (512) 458-7255, or e-mail eric.fonken@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Nutrition Conference

The Texas Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) had its annual nutrition conference in Austin, April 21 through April 23. More than 200 WIC educators from all parts of the state attended. Sessions included: promoting of breastfeeding among African-American women; nutrition care for children with feeding problems; understanding the early origins of adult chronic disease; the obesity epidemic and what WIC can do help stop it; connecting with teenage parents; tobacco cessation during pregnancy and beyond; using the stages of change model to counsel on fruit and vegetable consumption; results of the Texas WIC obesity and anemia studies; and more. *For more information, contact Barbara Keir, Bureau of Nutrition Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2144, or e-mail barbara.keir@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Administration



TDH Reviews, Reorganizes Fiscal Division

As part of an ongoing business-improvement initiative, the Texas Department of Health has completed a review of the Fiscal Division and reorganized the Accounts Payable and General Ledger Sections. A new organizational plan is available along with a brief description of these two sections. To implement this new plan, all current positions within the Accounts Payable and reorganized units of the General Ledger Section will be eliminated effective June 1, 2003. The positions created under the new organizational structure were posted on Wednesday, May 7. Employees have been encouraged to apply for the positions for which they have the required skill sets. There will be a three-day internal posting limited to employees of these units. *For more information, contact Machelle Pharr, Chief Financial Officer, at (512) 458-7640 or e-mail machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Agency Meets Compliance Date for Health Insurance Portability and Privacy Accountability

TDH met all requirements of the federal HIPAA privacy regulations by the April 14 compliance date. The department established administrative rules, policies, and procedures to implement the HIPAA privacy standards at TDH. Approximately 2,000 employees who perform “HIPAA-covered” functions completed computer-based privacy training. Regional offices, clinics, the South Texas Health Care System, and the Texas Center for Infectious Disease began distributing the TDH HIPAA Privacy Notice to direct-care clients on April 14. The notice tells clients about their privacy rights and the ways that TDH may use or disclose confidential health information. Certain contracts with TDH business associates will need to be amended to meet HIPAA standards within one year, by April 14, 2004. *For more information, contact John Scott, Bureau of Project Management, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6170, or e-mail john.scott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Policy Project

In response to concerns expressed by the State Auditor’s Office and the Survey of Organizational Excellence, the Deputy Commissioner for Administration and the Chief Financial Officer chartered a project to implement a new policy framework at TDH. The project is designed to improve understanding of and compliance with policy content and process. Initially, the project team is consolidating all policy into a single online manual and reviewing all existing policy to identify organizational “ownership.” The project scope focuses on policies within four ownership areas: Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Resources, and Operational Support. The project team, composed of representatives from the four ownership areas and liaisons to the programs, is currently developing new procedures and templates for initiating, writing, obtaining appropriate input for, approving, and publishing policy. The new framework will be launched with the issuance of the first Commissioner’s Directive on May 1. With a target completion of April 2004, the team will then begin renovation of existing policy with the goal of standardizing policy format, eliminating duplicative and obsolete policies, and ensuring all procedures are paired with a core policy. The successful project outcome will be a single, comprehensive TDH Policy Manual that is user-friendly, facilitates employee compliance, and supports management enforcement. *For more information, contact Judy Sandberg, Bureau of Project Management, at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail judy.sandberg@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Center for Health Statistics (CHS) Reorganization

The CHS was reorganized last month to maximize fulfillment of its mission to be “the source for timely, accurate, and useful health information in Texas.” CHS was created last December with the goal of forming “an organizational unit that will coordinate the department’s data and share data with other agencies to ensure that resources are available for decision-making.” This area has 39 staff and, under the new reorganization, consists of two divisions: (1) the Health Information Resources Division which collects, analyzes and disseminates health information for public health decision-making and consists of three sections -- Research & Methods, Community Assessment, and Data Management & Dissemination. Gary Rutenberg, Ph.D., is the director of the Health Information Resources Division; (2) the Health Provider Resources Division which

collects, analyzes and disseminates health information for decision-making regarding health provider resources in Texas and consists of three sections -- Health Professions Resource Center, Hospital Data and Texas Primary Care Office. Bruce Gunn, Ph.D., is the manager of the Health Professions Resource Center and the Hospital Data Section. Connie Berry is the manager of the Texas Primary Care Office. *For more information, contact Mike Gilliam, Center for Health Statistics, at (512) 458-7628 or e-mail mike.gilliam@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Communications and Campaigns



Media Inquiries and Offerings

The Office of Communications responded to 162 media inquiries in April including requests on West Nile Virus, Mercury in Fish, Rabies, SARS, radiation, smallpox vaccines, poison control, Children With Special Health Care Needs program, ephedrine, mold, smoking ban, vibrios, policy on CT, Medicaid dental, HIV medications, diabetes, budget, California oyster regulation, and OTC drugs.

TDH released public and news information on the following topics: *TDH Urges Parents to Have Children Screened for Lead* (ran in 42 daily and weekly newspapers); *Binational Project Offers Hope of Controlling Tuberculosis* (ran in 11 Texas daily and weekly newspapers); *Toll-free Connection Provides Help with Alluring Poisons* (ran in 17 daily and weekly newspapers); *Protect Texas Children with Appropriate Vaccinations* and *West Nile Virus Settles into Texas Landscape*.

Commissioner Eduardo J. Sanchez, M.D., M.P.H., appeared at a news conference on the importance of immunizations with Texas First Lady Anita Perry, complemented with an immunizations video news release. Approximately 13 million viewers saw this VNR in nine usages at TV stations in El Paso, Laredo, Weslaco, Odessa, Houston, and San Antonio. Equivalent advertising time (based on advertising rates for 60-second spots during newscasts in each market) would have cost \$12,960. Dr. Sanchez also contributed two newspaper commentaries, *The Persistence of TB* appearing in *Dallas Morning News*, *Austin American Statesman* and *Abilene Times*, and *Vaccines are the first line of defense in war on disease*. *For more information, contact Marsha Canright, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail marsha.canright@tdh.state.tx.us.*



WTDH Staff Offer Language Skills

The Language Services Volunteer Interpreter's Training Session is on schedule for May 19-20. TDH staff members who speak 20 different languages will participate in the two-day training at the Kramer Lane location.

Language Services was recognized for its participation, interpretation support, translation and review of the manual for the Binational Workshop on Medical Entomology, April 9-11. *For more information, contact Eddie Aursipa at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail eddie.aurispa@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Program Updates



WIC Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Interoperable Specification

At the request of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), TDH WIC has agreed to host and facilitate five joint application design (JAD) meetings to develop an interoperable software specification for off-line WIC EBT point-of-sale (POS) terminals. This specification will greatly reduce the level of effort for national grocery chains to integrate WIC functionality into their cash register systems. Chains can operate the same WIC EBT smart card system in any state. The retail community enthusiastically supports this effort. The specification also benefits our WIC clinics in serving out-of-state transfer clients. Texas WIC clinic terminals will be able to read WIC EBT smart cards issued by other states in addition to the New Mexico WIC smart card. *For more information, contact Ray Krzesniak, Bureau of Nutrition Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-3471, or e-mail ray.krzesniak@tdh.state.tx.us.*



National Women's Health Week (NWHW)

National Women's Health Week, observed this year May 11 -17, is a national effort by an alliance of federal health offices and non-profit organizations to raise awareness about manageable steps which women can take to improve their health. The focus is on the importance of incorporating simple preventive and positive health behaviors into everyday life. As a part of NWHW, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is sponsoring the first-ever Checkup Day on May 12. On this day, community health centers, hospitals, and other health providers across America will encourage women to come in for preventive health services or to schedule an appointment with their health-care provider for a checkup. Events are scheduled to take place in Dallas, Houston, and Galveston. *For more information, contact Chan McDermott, Bureau of Women's Health, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Food Security Inspection

The Meat Safety Assurance Division has added food-security verification procedures to the list of inspection procedures performed in meat- and poultry-processing establishments that produce ready-to-eat foods and raw ground-beef products. The food-security procedures are designed to thwart potential terrorist attacks through foods. The food-security procedures replace inspection procedures that verify that economic compliance standards are met, but do not reduce or replace inspection procedures that verify food-safety compliance. Food-security inspection procedures have been added in response to the former Homeland Security Threat Level Orange (high alert) and will remain in effect while the threat level is elevated. *For more information, contact Lee Jan, Meat Safety Assurance Division, at (512) 719-0205, ext. 472, or e-mail lee.jan@tdh.state.tx.us.*



New Food Manager Certification Requirement

The Retail Foods Division has recently launched a new food manager certification requirement that now requires all food establishments to have at least one certified manager. Certification may be obtained by passing an approved food-safety examination, and, while training is not required, it is recommended in order to pass the exam. Since implementation, the division has distributed more than 24,000 tests to accredited training programs or test sites. It is anticipated that they will certify about 18,500 food managers

within the next year. The examination was developed in-house and meets all psychometric standards for such tests and can be administered more cheaply than a national test that meets the same criteria. Based on the Texas Food Establishment Rules, the test covers such critical areas as proper temperatures, personal hygiene, hand washing, and cross-contamination between cooked and raw foods in the kitchen. In order to implement the new program, we have worked with the Texas A&M Agricultural Extension Service in an effort to make training and testing available in the rural areas of the state. Currently, 118 counties participate in the program through the Extension Service. We feel very good about the new program and feel that it will help to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness in Texas by educating the managers and employees who handle our food in restaurants and other eating establishments. *For more information, contact Steve McAndrew, Director, Retail Foods Division at (512) 719-0232, ext. 406, or e-mail steve.mcandrew@tdh.state.tx.us.*



ImmTrac Provider Education

The ImmTrac program utilized the department's videoconferencing capabilities to educate Region 1 Texas Vaccines For Children providers about ImmTrac. Program Specialist Adriana Rhames presented an overview of the ImmTrac Registry to approximately 90 providers on Thursday and Friday, April 10 and 11. Ms. Rhames provided the following literature items for inclusion in participants' packets: ImmTrac Registration Packet, Data Entry User Tips sheets, ImmTrac Consent Form, and the ImmTrac Paper Reporting Form. *For more information, contact Claude Longoria or Adriana Rhames, Immunization Division, ImmTrac Registry, at (512) 458-7284, or e-mail claudelongoria@tdh.state.tx.us or adriana.rhames@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pharmacy Inventory Control System (PICS) Update

April Implementation Training has been completed in Regions 1, 4, 7, 8, 9/10, and 11. Regions 2/3 will follow in May. Implementation of PICS is proceeding in Regions 6/5 with all programs excepting Immunizations, which will follow in mid- to late summer. *For more information, contact Dinny Smith, Pharmacy Division, at (512) 458-7500, ext. 2494, or e-mail dinny.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Impact of Reminder and Recall Project

The staff in Region 7 has been working with the St. Joseph's Healthcare System in Normangee to measure the impact of a reminder and recall project. Immunization records of 100 percent of the children under 36 months of age were entered into the CDC's Clinic Assessment Software Application (CASA). The baseline CASA coverage level was 44 percent.

Patients that were missing vaccinations were matched against ImmTrac. Adding the missing data into CASA raised the coverage level to 55 percent. Postcards were mailed to the parents of 137 children with missing vaccinations. Letters were sent to the parents of 185 children for whom there was no consent to use ImmTrac. A final CASA was conducted after the reminder/recall efforts and the coverage level was 60 percent, a 16 percent increase from the baseline level.

The results indicate that CASA, ImmTrac, reminder, and recall do have a significant impact on coverage levels at the clinic level. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis C staff speaks to Texas Society of Medical Assistants

On April 11, Gary Heseltine was the guest speaker at a Texas Society of Medical Assistants meeting at the Sheraton Four Points in Austin. He presented information to 80 medical assistants on hepatitis C epidemiology, and costs. He also discussed SARS. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Binational TB Card Introduction

The Binational TB card was introduced at a meeting and press conference in El Paso on March 27. The Border Health Commission convened the meeting. Speakers came from both Mexico and the United States. The card will be used as a pilot project for the next two years in El Paso/Juarez/Las Cruces, San Diego/Tijuana and one district each in the interior Mexican states of Michoacan, Jalisco, Veracruz and Oaxaca. *For more information contact Ann Tyree, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail ann.tyree@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB Workshop for Correctional Settings

Members of the TB Elimination Division presented information about TB at a training workshop for correctional-facility employees sponsored by the TB Education Center and Region 9/10. The workshop was held in Midland on March 24-26. *For more information, contact Ann Tyree, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail ann.tyree@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Presentation on Interpreter Pools

On Friday, March 14, TDH hosted an international delegation including representatives from Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, and Serbia-Montenegro. The delegation was interested in how state agencies work with private and non-profit partners (both volunteers and through contractual arrangements.) The Refugee Health Screening Program presented on its contractual collaborations with local voluntary refugee resettlement agencies, which establish Interpreter Resource Projects in principal refugee areas. These projects provide interpreter training and administer interpreter pools in refugee and other languages. The goal is to establish permanent, self-supporting interpretation resources for providers of medical care and other services to refugees and other limited-English speaking residents. *For more information, contact Sam Householder, Refugee Health Screening Program, at (512) 458-7494 or e-mail sam.householder@tdh.state.tx.us.*



New TB Treatment

On April 28, 2003, the TB Elimination Division hosted a meeting of experts in TB treatment and control to discuss implementation in Texas of the new TB treatment guidelines published by the American Thoracic Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Infectious Disease Society of America. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas HIV Medications Program Eligibility

The Texas Board of Health tabled proposed rules that would have tightened eligibility requirements for the Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP). Revised TDH projections indicate that the THMP is facing an \$8.3 million deficit this fiscal year, a \$16.1 million

deficit in 2004, and a \$20 million deficit in 2005. To address the deficits, the proposed rules were posted in the Texas Register in November 2002 and would have lowered the financial eligibility criteria for access to the THMP from the current 200 percent (based on adjusted income) of the federal poverty level to 140 percent (based on actual income) of the federal poverty level. The Board of Health charged TDH staff to continue to look for alternate cost-savings options to address the projected deficits; staff are currently developing several alternative options for consideration by executive management. *For more information, contact Linda Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Child Blood-Lead Level Registry

We closed calendar year 2002 data with 305,000 reports of blood-lead tests for children under age 15. A review shows that:

- 3.8% (11,653 tests) are elevated (10 micrograms per deciliter),
- over 19% (2,253 tests) of those tests are results at or above 20 mcg/dL, and
- 2.7% (314 tests) of those tests are results at or above 40 mcg/dL.

For more information, contact Teresa Willis, Texas CLPPP, Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology, at (512) 458-7151 or e-mail teresa.willis@tdh.state.tx.us.



Cancer Registry

Progress toward implementing cancer reporting by clinical pathology laboratory continues (in compliance with Health and Safety Code, Chapter 82; Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 91, Subchapter A). Two hundred sixty-seven surveys were sent to freestanding clinical laboratories to obtain formation about their capacity for reporting cancer diagnoses electronically. Seventy-two surveys have been completed and returned. The Cancer Registry continues to participate in a TDH Electronic Laboratory Reporting Focus Group to evaluate the possibility of linking electronic laboratory reporting with the Texas NEDSS (National Electronic Disease Surveillance System) project. *For more information, contact Nancy Weiss, Cancer Registry, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail nancy.weiss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Cancer Mortality Statistics, 2000

Texas Cancer Mortality Statistics, 2000, was published on the TCR web site at <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/TCR/publications/tcms2000/cmit2000.pdf>. *For more information, contact Dr. Melanie Williams, Cancer Registry Division, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail melanie.williams@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hispanic Call for Data

Representatives from the Texas Cancer Registry have continued to serve on a subcommittee of the National Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR), developing best practices for identifying Hispanics in cancer registries. Texas has been invited to participate in a national “Hispanic Call for Data.” This will result in the first national cancer-data compilation effort in which all states apply the same criteria for identifying Hispanics, allowing NAACCR to publish national cancer rates for Hispanics. Because Texas has such a large Hispanic population, NAACCR considers Texas data

crucial for inclusion in this study. They have therefore modified the data years requested to accommodate the timeliness of Texas' cancer-data reporting. *For more information, contact Cheryl Bowcock, Cancer Registry Division, at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail cheryl.bowcock@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas-Tamaulipas Border States Birth Defects Project

As part of the continuing “The Texas-Tamaulipas Border States Birth Defects Project: Neural Tube Defect (NTD) Prevention Pilot in *Los Dos Laredos*,” on April 1 a Folic Acid Awareness Day Proclamation was read with the mayor. The news media was on hand, as well as TBDMD Regional Program Manager Jorge Trevino. *For more information, contact Mark Canfield, Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division, at (512) 458-7232 or e-mail mark.canfield@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Public Health Region 1



Public Health Preparedness work group

A Public Health Preparedness Work Group of 21 members has been formed in Region 1. The work group's membership consists of county judges, representatives from the region's two Council of Governments, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, the Regional Advisory Committees (Lubbock and Amarillo) and the TDH Region 1 Bioterrorism Preparedness staff. The workgroup is charged with assessing preparedness plans, exchanging best practices, coordinating activities among jurisdictions and testing regional plans. The first meeting was scheduled for May 7. *For more information, contact Sandra Perez, Public Health Preparedness, at (806) 767-0408 or e-mail sandra.perez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tuberculosis Elimination Program

Region 1's Tuberculosis Elimination Program staff recently dealt with an unusual, though not unique, active tuberculosis (TB) patient. The patient is a 45-year-old seasonal farm worker with a previous history of prophylactic treatment for contact with TB. He was diagnosed with active TB in the fall of 2002 and began a directly observed therapy (DOT) drug regimen. As the patient began to feel better, he became somewhat non-compliant. Also, his drug regimen was changed after he experienced some adverse side affects. Because the patient's sputum cultures continued to test positive for TB and due to the patient's uncertain residential status and his apparent resistance to usual treatment regimens, the decision was made to transport him to the Texas Center for Infectious Disease (TCID) in San Antonio. TDH staff members escorted the patient to ensure his safe arrival and to facilitate his admission to the facility. *For more information, contact Deborah Isaacks, TB Program, at (806) 767-0316 or e-mail deborah.isaacks@tdh.state.tx.us or Barry Wilson, TB Program, at (806) 767-0496 or e-mail barry.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 4 and 5 North



‘Shaping the Future’ Conference

“Shaping the Future,” a conference on nutrition, physical activity, and health, was held on Friday, April 25, at the University of Texas Health Center in Tyler as a part of the hospital’s Grand Rounds program. One of the speakers was Dr. Tim Church, medical director of the Cooper Institute in Dallas, who spoke on “Linking Personal Health with Physical Activity.” Dr. Siripoom McKay, Baylor College of Medicine, spoke on “Type II Diabetes in Children,” and Dr. Jonathan MacClements, assistant professor of Family Practice at the University of Texas Health Center, spoke on “Breaking the Obesity Cycle in Families.” A panel discussion regarding the State Obesity Strategic Plan concluded the meeting. The three panel members included Claire Heiser, TDH-Austin, and Region 4/5N nutritionists Gretchen Stryker and Susan Bennett. This was one of the first conferences to be beamed over our new interactive satellite equipment. Satellite capability made it possible for staff to participate in the training, even though travel funds have been cut. This educational activity was a joint endeavor of the UT Health Center, TDH, and the Lake Country Area Health Education Center (AHEC). *For more information, contact Gretchen Stryker, WIC Nutrition, at (903) 533-5315 or e-mail gretchen.stryker@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6 and 5 South



National Infant Immunization Week Report

On Tuesday, April 15, Region 6/5 South Immunization Program hosted a reception in observance of National Infant Immunization Week. Attending the event were representatives from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), local health departments, immunization coalitions, University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Vaccines For Children (VFC) providers, TDH staff, and others. Awards were given to six VFC providers who achieved 100% immunization rate among children 19-35 months of age. A Texas Board of Health resolution designated April 13-19 as Infant Immunization Awareness Week in Texas. Dr. Aftab Hashim, associate regional director for Disease Prevention and Family Health, read the resolution. Speakers included Dr. Celine Hanson, regional director, and Alkarim Kanji, regional Immunization Program manager. Topics included sharing of ideas on ways of creating more awareness among parents about the importance of immunization. Approximately 80 individuals attended this informative event. *For more information, contact Alkarim Kanji, Region 6/5South Immunizations Program, at (713) 767-3412 or e-mail alkarim.kanji@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Mayor’s and Council’s Association Meeting

On April 17, the Region 6/5S director, Dr. Celine Hanson, conducted a presentation at the Harris County Mayor’s and Council’s Association meeting. Membership in the

association consists of over 32 municipalities and townships. Dr. Hanson educated those attending about the many services that TDH provides to the community. About 20 townships were represented at the event. *For more information, contact Dr. I. Celine Hanson, Region 6/5S, at (713) 767-3019 or e-mail celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



State Representatives visits

From March 24 to March 27, the Region 6/5S regional director, Dr. Celine Hanson, met with eight different state representatives or their staff members within Region 6/5S. Dr. Hanson updated the representatives or staff members on TDH activities and provided them with a regional public health perspective on pending legislation. *For more information, contact Dr. I. Celine Hanson, Region 6/5S, at (713) 767-3019 or e-mail celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public Health Preparedness

The regional planner has conducted Public Health Preparedness presentations in Austin, Colorado, Liberty, Matagorda, Walker, Waller, and Wharton counties, which are the Region 6 counties that lack local health departments. The stakeholders who attended these presentations included county health authorities, county judges, county commissioners, county emergency management coordinators, school superintendents, school nurses, county sheriffs, police, emergency medical services, fire chiefs, hospital representatives, Texas Department of Criminal Justice representatives, and the media. The presentations provided information regarding Region 6's activities in the area of smallpox preparedness, syndromic surveillance, and preparedness against other public health threats. Additionally, the presentations expressed the need for community involvement to ensure a successful public health outcome in the event of a disaster and for accurate syndromic surveillance. *For more information, contact Barbara Key, Public Health Preparedness, at (713) 767-3003, or e-mail barbara.key@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 7



Animal Rabies Cases in Region 7 for 2003

Between January 1 and April 22, Region 7 Zoonosis Control investigated 133 rabid animal cases. One hundred thirty-three cases in the 3.5 months of 2003 accounts for 49% of the total rabies cases investigated during 2002 (N = 271). Bell, Fayette, and Lee counties continue to experience increased case numbers compared to last year. Public health and animal-control officials in these communities have been notified. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Training

The nutritionist, Cardiovascular Health & Wellness program manager, and Public Health Improvement program manager from Region 7 became official trainers for the CATCH program in November 2002. They provided CATCH training at Educational Service Center 12 in Waco, for Clifton I.S.D. CATCH is a program that improves the quality of life for our children, and assists schools in the state-mandated implementation of

coordinated school-health programming. *For more information, contact Terri Kemp, Cardiovascular Health and Wellness, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2345, or e-mail terri.kemp@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Recall and Reminder Project

A recall and reminder project was conducted at the St. Joseph's Healthcare System, which includes JB Heath Clinic, Powell Clinic, and Normangee Health Center. The purpose of this project was to measure the impact of a one-time notification, by mail, to the parents of children whose immunizations are delinquent. As a result of the project 100 records were updated in some manner (ImmTrac consent, immunization update, address change, etc.) and an increase of 16% in the 4:3:1 rate and permanent implementation of the recall and reminder system at the Normangee Clinic. *For more information, contact Arlynda Parcus, Immunization Program, at (254) 788-6744, ext. 2420, or e-mail arlynda.parcus@tdh.state.tx.us.*



National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW)

In recognition of NIIW, April 13 through 18, Region 7 presented certificates of appreciation and recognition to the Vaccines for Children providers in the categories of longevity and providing services in a non-traditional setting (EMS, school nurses etc.). Articles were also placed in the local newspapers thanking all of the Vaccines for Children providers. *For more information, contact Arlynda Parcus, Immunization Program, at (254) 788-6744, ext. 2420, or e-mail arlynda.parcus@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 9 and 10



Public Health Week

Region 9/10 celebrated Public Health Week by hosting a community forum to honor El Paso City County Health District's 70-year birthday celebration. Guest speakers included Dolores Briones, El Paso county judge. *For more information, contact Beatrice Martínez, Region 9/10, at (915) 834-7675 or e-mail beatrice.martinez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tuberculosis

The Texas Centers for Infectious Disease and Region 9/10 co-hosted a tuberculosis medical update for correctional facilities in Midland. Participants from central and west Texas attended the event. *For more information, contact Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bioterrorism

The regional director delivered a Bioterrorism and Emergency Preparedness lecture to San Angelo-area physicians. The event was co-hosted by Shannon Medical Center and the Texas Medical Association. *For more information, contact Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Employee Retreats

Region 9/10 is hosting staff retreats to offer training and information to staff about agency changes. Retreats are coordinated to ensure participation without interruptions to customer service. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7777 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency Response Team

ERT staff continues to work actively on Phase I Smallpox vaccination efforts. Over 300 health workers have been vaccinated. *For more information, contact Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7689 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*